

PKR exit polls: Anwar has won
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Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's PKR said today its exit polls indicate he has won 61 percent of the votes in a by-election expected to return him to parliament.
MCPX

"From our exit poll figures and what we are tracking, Anwar is safely leading in the polls and... I think that it is right to say about 61 percent," said Sivarasa Rasiah, PKR vice-president.

anwar ibrahim and arif shah omar shah candidate for permatang pauh by election
140808Sivarasa said that Anwar's opponent from the Barisan Nasional coalition, Arif Shah Omar Shah, had garnered about 39 percent of the vote.

"We are still not declaring victory as we will wait for the official election results from the Election Commission," he told AFP a few hours before polling closes.

With the turnout at 65 percent, this will translate into 23,000 votes for Anwar against Arif's 15,000, with a majority of around 8,000.

This estimates discount the votes for the third candidate, Hanafi Hamat of Akim, who is not expected to pick up many votes.

The turnout in this by-election is much lower than the 82 percent in the March 8 general elections.

Polling booths opened at 8am and closed at 5pm. Unofficial results are expected to be known by 8pm.

Anwar has been widely tipped to win the vote in Permatang Pauh, an electorate in his home state of Penang which he held until he was sacked as deputy prime minister in 1998 and jailed on sodomy and corruption charges.

'Lower turnout among non-Malays'

Anwar said that although the opposition-controlled state government of Penang had declared a public holiday to boost turnout, many workers were not given time off to cast their ballots.

permatang pauh past election results 060808

"Most of the core supporters of PKR are factory workers. My concern is the turnout and it's too low for comfort," he said.

Political pundits said they will focus on the size of the winning margin, compared to that attained by Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail who held the seat during his political exile.

"We are expecting Anwar's win to be the same as big as when Wan Azizah contested but we think that it will be less in terms of absolute numbers due to it being a working day for many," Sivarasa said.

Wan Azizah won about 64 percent of votes cast in March general elections, with a majority of 13,400.

The groundswell of support allowed the opposition to take control of five states and a third of parliamentary seats.

Turnout in March was 81 percent, but PKR information chief Tian Chua said only 60 percent of eligible voters had cast their ballot by mid-afternoon, and that numbers from ethnic minorities were low.

"Chinese and Indian voters are not coming out as much as we had expected. This could be due to intimidation," he said, with a couple hours of polling to go.

The opposition has accused the government of stoking tensions between Malays and the nation's ethnic minorities to try to undermine Anwar, by painting him as a 'Chinese agent' who has sold out Malay interests.

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